

Keys to the Retention of College Professors

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Introduction

Retaining teachers in their early professional stages or afterwards is a major issue that raises concerns. The resilience of college professors in respect to what motivates their retention in their various educational faculties is an emerging field that has sparked interest among scholars.

Keys to retention of K-12 teachers

1. Administrative support (Ingersoll, 2001; Plecki, 2005; Ponjuan, Conley & Trower, 2011).
2. Relationships (communication & collaboration) (Johnson, 2006; Ponjuan, Conley & Trower, 2011; Qayyum, 2013).
3. Access to resources (Johnson, 200; Plecki, 2005; Vaidya & Zaslavsky, 2000; Weiner, 2003).

Keys to retention of college professors

1. Administrative support (Ryan, 2012).
2. Relationships (administrators, professors, & students) (Soodak Podell & Lehman, 1998).
3. Resources (The New Teacher Project, 2012).
4. Individual's personal interests (Ingersoll, 2001).
5. Salary (Qayyum, 2013).

Through these factors which are similar across the profession, teachers desire to stay in their schools is manifested. As such, one can say that, these factors are different to those that influence the college, professors' retention to their universities.

Research questions

- 1) What factors influence college professors' desire and/or ability to stay in the field of higher education?
- 2) Are these factors similar to or different from the factors that influence K-12 teachers to stay in their field?

Method

Procedure

All four professors were women the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

- 1). Rose was a full professor who has also been an administrator off and on.
- 2). Amy was a full Professor
- 3). Susan was an associate professor with some administration and some teaching.
- 4). Sara was an associate professor.

Recruitment. Invitation emails were sent to 15 professors who were recommended to the researcher to ask for the interview. Based on interest and availability, the researcher scheduled approximately 1-hour meetings with four of those who responded based on the order that they responded to the invitation.

Interview. The questions for the interviews were developed based upon the findings of previous research about teacher retention at K-12 and university levels. The interviews contained a section dedicated to the grand tour questions and the mini tour questions (Spradley, 1979).

Qualitative methods were used to collect data through analysis of responses during a semi-structured interview.

Analysis Explanation

During coding of the interview data, statements emerged to support the theme of academic freedom. Academic freedom means that able to do what they like and not to be forced to do it is one of the important factors to stay in the job.

Professors referred to the importance of "academic freedom" as a factor of help them stay in their job when asked about administrative support for decision-making.

For example these excerpts were coded under academic freedom.

Dr. Amy To be able to do the work, I think it is important. If I were being forced to teach classes that I hate it, or being told that the research that I was doing was not acceptable, then I would leave. But that hasn't happened here and I don't think that it will, but if it does then I would leave.

In addition, a statement from Dr. Rose was "Well, one big thing that they let me do what I like." (Interview, October 22, 2013). Therefore, those professors agree at the same idea which is academic freedom in teaching is very important to stay in the job, because they are free to choose how and which knowledge is important to give to students. Professors would make these decisions. They like the independence of their work, which is meant the "academic freedom". Dr. Susan referred to the importance of independence; "the most important thing I need to stay in my job is as long to be independent and creative" (Interview, November 5, 2013).

Dr. Sara: There is a sort of freedom that I feel like I can teach courses that have material that might be up setting for people, that might be challenging to people. And I feel save that if a student complain and said, you know, so and so..., I feel save. The university will say, "That's a part of academic freedom" so that's a great thing. I really do love it here.

Dr. Rose: We do get to make more decisions than some and that is very important to most faculties because we tend to be very independent that we like that life style. So, we have academic freedom. We are allowed to teach our classes pretty much the way we want to as long as students are meeting a learning objective... So, in the classroom, we have a lot of freedom. We pretty much get to decide what research areas we want to specialize on, which is good.

Findings and Limitation

Results indicate that:

- Academic freedom is an important key factor that helps professors to stay in their job.
- Participants indicated included enjoying their jobs, creativity, learning how to change their way of thinking, and problem solving.
- Having worthy resources is other aspect help retention of college professors, which is similar to K-12 teacher.
- A good relationship between faculty members is also another aspect influencing the retention of college professors.
- Participants reported that salary is a less- effective factor as compared to the importance of the other factors indicated.
- Some of the factors that influenced college professor retention were similar to K-12 teacher retention, however; there are other factors influenced college professors.

Limitation

This study was conducted on a single campus, with relatively small number participants who were all female, and were recommended to the researcher. As such, the data and findings are not generalizable to other environments.